

11-4087-4

13 MAY 1959

fact
Dr. Robert M. Farrier
Assistant Director
The Clinical Center
National Institutes of Health
Bethesda 14, Maryland

Dear Bob:

I appreciate your note of April 17 transmitting the copy of the report to the Director of NIH entitled, "NIAMD Study Suggests Gout May Be Associated With Higher-Than-Normal Intelligence."

I suppose it is some comfort to think that *when I am hobbling about, physically impaired, at least there is a good likelihood that I am at the same time mentally alert!

With best wishes.

Faithfully yours,

SIGNED

Allen W. Dulles
Director

STAT

STAT
O/DCI/ rad 12 May 1959

Distribution:

Orig - Addressee
1 - DCI
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-1 - ER w/basic

*There hasn't been much hobbling recently and my tennis has improved. AWD

EXECUTIVE REGISTRY

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DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND WELFARE

PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE

BETHESDA 14, MD.

Executive Registry
11-4087

NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH

gm

April 17, 1959

STAT

[Redacted]
Office of Director
Central Intelligence Agency
2430 E Street, NW.
Washington 25, D.C.

Dear Jack:

When the boss gets to feeling badly about
the way things are going, you might show him this
report *from* the National Institute of Arthritis and
Metabolic Diseases.

Sincerely yours,

Rob

Robert M. Farrier, M.D.
Assistant Director
The Clinical Center

Enclosure

NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF ARTERITIS AND METABOLIC DISEASES

Director, NIE

April 8, 1959

Acting Director, NIAMD

Report for week ending April 8, 1959

NIAMD Study Suggests Gout May Be Associated With Higher-Than-Normal Intelligence:

NIAMD scientists have found evidence that gout may be associated with higher-than-normal intelligence. A study of 817 inductees shows a small but definite positive correlation between blood level of uric acid and IQ test results.

NIAMD scientists have found evidence that gout--a disease once mistakenly attributed to over-indulgence--might be associated with higher-than-normal intelligence. This possibility will be reported by Dr. DeWitt Stetten, Jr., Associate Director in Charge of Research, and Dr. John Hearon, head of NIAMD's Office of Mathematical Research, to the annual meeting of the Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology, at Atlantic City, New Jersey on April 17.

Gout is a relatively infrequent disease associated with increased amounts of uric acid in the blood. It has appeared to many students of the disease that the number of prominent scientists, diplomats and writers who have suffered from gout is remarkably high considering the relative rarity of the disease. Among the great men of history who have reputedly suffered from gout are Benjamin Franklin, William Harvey, Sir Isaac Newton, Charles Darwin, Martin Luther, John Calvin, Goethe, Alfred Lord Tennyson and Stendhal.

To explore the hypothesis that there might be a correlation between intelligence and the blood level of uric acid, the NIAMD scientists measured the serum uric acid concentrations of blood samples which had been routinely taken from a group of 817 successive inductees in the Armed Forces at Fort Dix, New Jersey. At the same time the investigators obtained the scores achieved by the same inductees on the Army Classification Battery (ACB), a group of tests designed to measure general intelligence and special aptitudes. (The results obtained with the ACB are known to correlate quite highly with other IQ tests such as the Stanford-Binet and the Wechsler-Bellevue.)

A statistical comparison of the scores achieved by the inductees on the ACB and the concentration of uric acid in their blood showed that a small but definite positive correlation existed between the two. Thus, the higher the serum uric acid, the more likely it was that the individual had a higher score on the ACB. The chance that this

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Director, NIH--April 8, 1959

positive correlation was only accidental was less than one in sixty. The correlation was of a very low order (.07) however, and indicated that there were other unknown variables which were influencing the results.

Two interpretations can be given to the study, the investigators reported. One is that increased amounts of uric acid in the blood tend to promote intellectual achievement. Chemically uric acid resembles caffeine and other substances known to stimulate the cerebral cortex of the brain, and it is possible that uric acid produces the same effect although there is no evidence at present to demonstrate such stimulating action.

A second possible conclusion is that the higher level of serum uric acid in some individuals may reflect merely a diet richer in protein and purines and bear no relation to intellectual functioning. An attempt was made to eliminate this possibility by restricting the study to inductees at the Reception Station who were on a uniform diet for 48 hours before the blood sampling.

Further research will be needed before uric acid's exact relationship, if any, to intellectual functioning is known, but the NIAMD study has afforded at least a partial scientific confirmation of the association between gout and greatness.


G. Donald Whedon